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INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Archibald MacLeish (1892–1982)
Also: Centennials of Other Americans

Library of Congress

INFORMATION BULLETIN

JAMES H. BILLINGTON
Librarian of Congress

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On the Cover: Archibald MacLeish, poet, playwright, public servant and Librarian of Congress from 1939 to 1944, at the Library, 1943. This year is the centennial of his birth. *Photo from LC Archives*

Cover Story: Many of America's most colorful figures either were born or died 100 years ago. Profiles of Pearl S. Buck, James M. Cain, Janet Flanner, Archibald MacLeish, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Walt Whitman. 211

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Book Excerpt: "Archibald MacLeish: An American Life" was published this month by Houghton Mifflin. This is the first of several excerpts relating to MacLeish's tenure at LC from Scott Donaldson's biography. 218

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GUY LAMOLINARA, Editor
JOHN J. WAYNE, Editorial Assistant
ANN M. JEFFERSON, PEGGY F. PIXLEY, SHERYLE O. SHEARS, Composing

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Archibald MacLeish at 100:
LC Reception, Biography Mark Centennial

The Library observed the centennial of the birth of poet, playwright and Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish with a celebration May 7, exactly 100 years after MacLeish's birth.

"Among my predecessors, the one with whom I feel the most kinship in spirit is Archibald MacLeish, because he envisioned the Library of Congress as a great cultural and educational institution, a vision he derived in part from Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who had used it to persuade MacLeish to accept the job," said Librarian James H. Billington.

"But MacLeish probably preferred always to think of himself as a poet," he continued, "and it is that side of his life which we particularly celebrate on this, the 100th anniversary of his birth."

MacLeish biographer Scott Donaldson, whom the Librarian introduced, spoke on "the public man and private man." According to Mr. Donaldson, MacLeish often said, "'Mr. Roosevelt decided I wanted to be Librarian of Congress.'"

Guests were then treated to a reading of MacLeish's poetry by poet Henry Taylor. The program was presented by the Library's Gertrude Clarke Whittall Poetry and Literature Fund.

Archibald MacLeish, whose literary honors include three Pulitzer Prizes and the National Book Award, was the only American to have received both the National Medal for Literature and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He graduated from Hotchkiss School, Yale University, and Harvard Law School, choosing to become a poet rather than a partner in his law firm. He went to Paris during the 1920s and there wrote some of his major poems, among them "Ars Poetica," "The End of the World" and "You, Andrew Marvell." Back in the United States in the 1930s, Mr. MacLeish became an editor of *Fortune* magazine.

The Librarian welcomed poet Henry Taylor (center) of American University and MacLeish biographer Scott Donaldson (right) during the May 7 reception. *Photo by Reid Baker*

In 1939 Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed him Librarian of Congress. Mr. MacLeish reorganized the Library, creating the post of Consultant in Poetry (now Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry), and simultaneously served in the wartime Office of Facts and Figures as well as writing speeches for President Roosevelt. He subsequently became assistant secretary of state for cultural and public affairs and, with Adlai Stevenson, helped draft the United Nations charter and write its preamble. Following World War II, MacLeish resumed his literary career and joined the faculty of Harvard University.

Scott Donaldson is the author of *Archibald MacLeish: An American Life*. He is the Louise G.T. Cooley Professor of English at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. His other publications include critical biographies of other writers, including *By Force of Will: The Life of Ernest Hemingway* (1977) and *Fool for Love: F. Scott Fitzgerald* (1983).

Henry Taylor, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet for his collection *The Flying Change* (1985), is on the faculty of American University, where he also directs the M.F.A. program in creative writing. A new work, *Compulsory Figures: Essays on Recent American Poets*, and a combined edition, *The Horse Show at Midnight and An Afternoon of Pocket Billiards*, will be published this year by Louisiana State University Press.

Gwen Verdon and Bob Fosse raise the temperature in the "Steam Heat" sequence from the film "Damn Yankees" (1958)

Career Documentation:

LC Receives Bob Fosse/Gwen Verdon Collection

Tony Award-winning stage and film dancer-actress Gwen Verdon presented the Library with her personal collection of memorabilia and other items that span her career as well as that of her late husband, Bob Fosse, critically acclaimed choreographer and director, during a May 6 news conference at LC's Mary Pickford Theater.

Librarian James H. Billington accepted the gift, which is an extensive collection of more than 100 boxes containing choreographies, films, videotapes, sound recordings, posters, photographs and other production materials including set designs and models. The collection also includes correspondence, scrapbooks, scripts, casting files, press reviews, news clippings, programs, appointment books and daily notes. The materials will be held by the Library's divisions of Music and Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound.

"This generous gift substantially enhances our already strong collections of musical theater, dance and musical film materials," Dr. Billington said.

"The assembly, organization and preservation of the Bob Fosse and Gwen Verdon materials required tremendous commitment from both Mr. Fosse and Miss Verdon over their entire lives. Such commitment is indeed appreciated by the Library, and will be an exceptional resource for scholars in the future," he added.

During the news conference Miss Verdon also presented an additional box of items to the Library, which contains such career memorabilia as a video of the 25th anniversary of the Tony Awards, Mr. Fosse's original shooting script of the film "Star 80" (1983) and an original, four-page letter that expresses Mr. Fosse's dissatisfaction with the director's editing of the television version of his Tony Award-winning musical "Pippin" (1972).

Reading from the letter, Miss Verdon said that Bob Fosse often said that "cut-to-the-bone economy is the most extraordinary thing you can do" in the theater.

Mr. Fosse, known as one of the musical theater's greatest choreog-

raphers and directors, earned Tony Awards for his productions of the musicals "Pajama Game" (1954), "Damn Yankees" (1955), "Redhead" (1959), "Little Me," "Sweet Charity" (both 1966), "Pippin" (1972) and "Dancin'" (1978).

He also won three Emmy Awards for his television special "Liza with a Z" (1972). That same year, he won an Academy Award as best director for "Cabaret." He also directed and choreographed the film "All That Jazz" (1979), an autobiographical work. Other work included directing the film "Lenny" (1974) and choreographing the film "The Little Prince" (1974).

In 1986 Mr. Fosse directed and choreographed "Big Deal," a Broadway production that he also wrote.

Miss Verdon, who made her Broadway debut in "Alive and Kicking" in 1950, earned a Tony Award for each of her performances in "Can-Can" (1953), "Damn Yankees" (1955), "New Girl in Town" (1957) and "Redhead" (1959). She is also known for her starring role in the Broadway production of "Sweet Charity" and for her work in "Pippin."

Miss Verdon's film appearances include "On the Riviera" (1951), "Meet Me After the Show" (1951), "David and Bathsheba" (1952), "Mississippi Gambler" (1953), "Damn Yankees" (1958), "Cocoon I" (1986), "The Cotton Club" (1984) and "Cocoon II" (1988).

In addition, she has appeared in numerous television shows including "M*A*S*H," "Dear John," "Webster" and "Magnum, P.I.," which earned her an Emmy Award nomination. She was also a guest of China, where she taught theater dance to the Beijing Ballet Company.

"The Music Division looks forward to serving the Bob Fosse/Gwen Verdon Collection to scholars in the years to come. We anticipate that much exciting research will benefit from this generous gift presented by Miss Verdon," said James W. Pruett, chief of the Library's Music Division.

Dr. Pruett noted that the Library is currently developing long-range plans for the preservation of American dance for the scholars of the next century.

"We believe that this extensive and comprehensive collection of materials donated today will greatly enhance the scholarly work being done in the field of dance history, particularly the study of musical theater dance," added Vicky J. Wulff, LC's dance reference librarian.

Although Miss Verdon said there was not one item in particular contained in the collection that was a favorite of hers, she said she did prefer the "Mumbo" dance number she performs in Mr. Fosse's "Damn Yankees" to the clip of her dancing as Lola, which was shown during the ceremony as part of a film montage created to represent the collection.

"I'm embarrassed to be dancing around here, it's such a prestigious place," Miss Verdon said after watching herself as Lola.

She said that the material contained in the collection had been stored in "footlockers, trunks and drawers" of dressers that had become so full they were unusable for anything else.

"I was collecting it and not even realizing I was collecting it," she said.

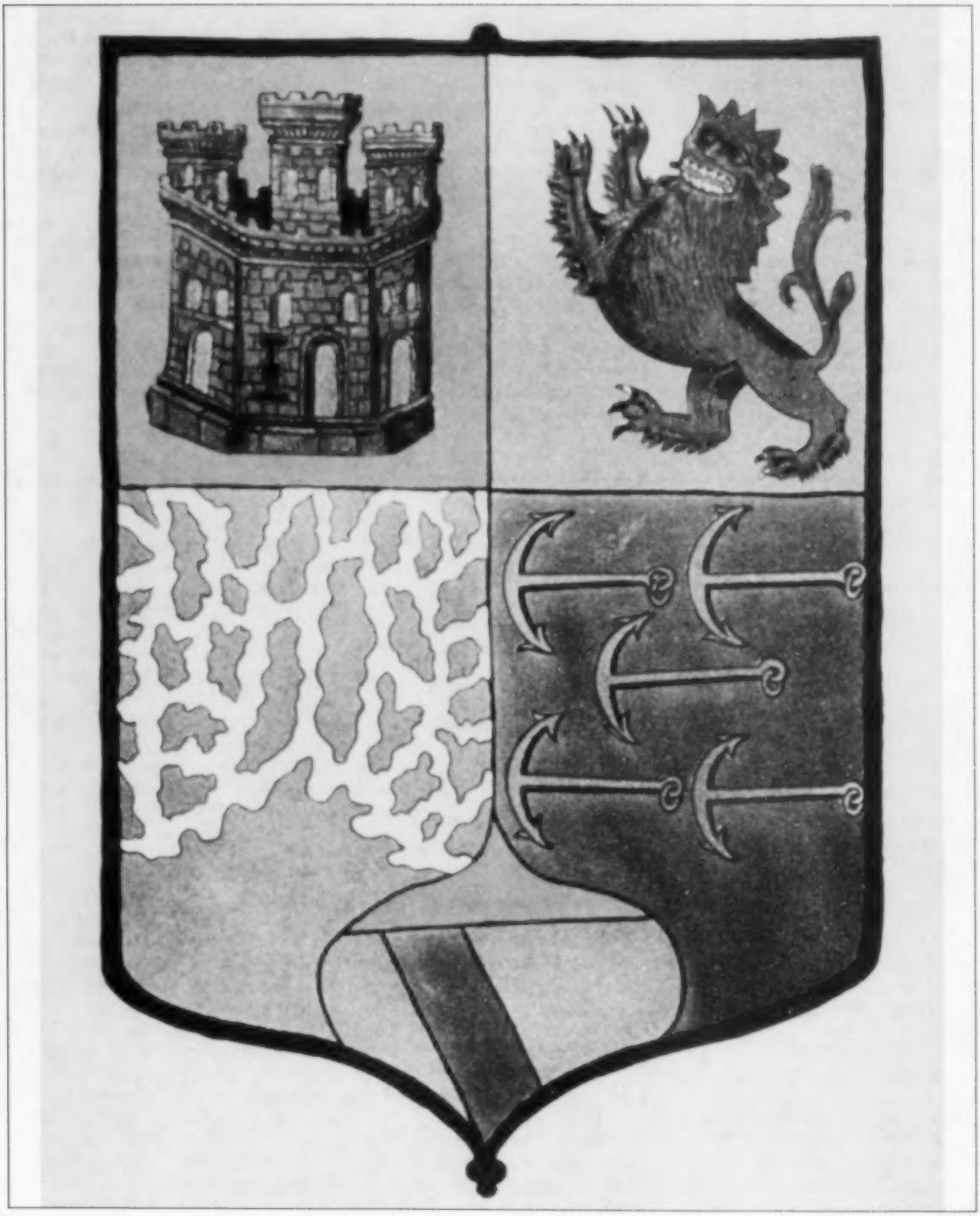
"Bob always said his life is an open pamphlet," said Miss Verdon. "This collection will prove that it was more than an open pamphlet."

Mr. Fosse and Miss Verdon married in 1960 and had one daughter. Nicole Fosse, also a professional dancer, recently appeared on Broadway in "The Phantom of the Opera." Although separated, Mr. Fosse and Miss Verdon remained close friends and collaborators until his death on opening night of a revival of "Sweet Charity" at the National Theater in Washington, D.C., in 1987.

Since his death, Miss Verdon has served as custodian of the Fosse materials. She chose the Library of Congress to serve as the collection's custodian because of the institution's reputation as a leader in the application of preservation and conservation techniques for film, video and paper documents. The Bob Fosse/Gwen Verdon Collection will join other American musical theater and performing arts collections held by the Library that document the lives and careers of such artists as Joshua Logan, Rodgers and Hammerstein, George and Ira Gershwin, Victor Herbert and Sigmond Romberg. Other collections include those of Martha Graham, Aaron Copland and Irving Berlin.

—Annemarie Roketenetz

Gwen Verdon, the Librarian and James Pruett enjoy a few of the posters featuring Miss Verdon outside the Pickford Theater. *Photo by Jim Higgins*



'The Atlantic Joined':
Europe Reaches the New World

This is Part 3 in a series of articles on the Library's quincentenary exhibit, "1492: An Ongoing Voyage (Part 1 appeared March 23; Part 2, April 20), which will open Aug. 13 for six months in the Madison Memorial Gallery. The last part of the series will be published in June. In July, the Information Bulletin *will publish a cover story on the Library's Quincentenary Program. The third section of "An Ongoing Voyage" focuses on Columbus and the meeting of the American and Mediterranean worlds as a result of his voyages.*

Just as the New World was "created" in the images of Europeans, so too has Christopher Columbus been created in the images of historians.

It is ironic that someone whose achievements are so indelibly etched in history remains himself an enigma.

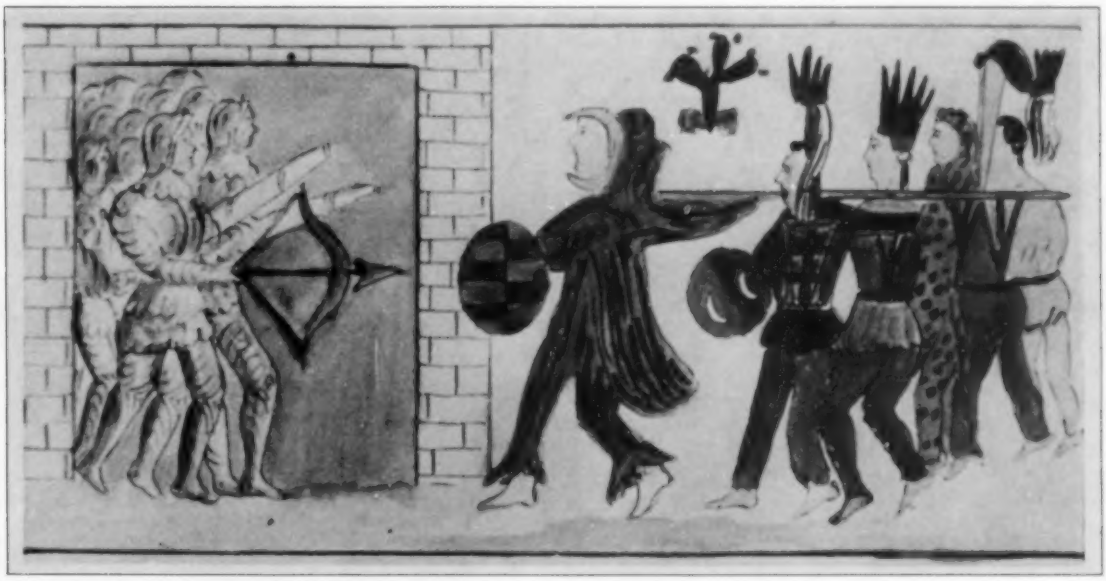
"Columbus has been variously described as one of the greatest mariners in history, a visionary genius, a mystic, a national hero, a failed administrator, a naive entrepreneur and a ruthless and greedy imperialist," said John Hébert, coordinator of the Library's Quincentenary Program.

"One of the failings of some historical accounts of Columbus is that they put him in a totally unrealistic context; he is placed on a pedestal to be revered or reviled," he continued. "In this exhibit we wanted to place Columbus in the context of his times."

Dr. Hébert's views are echoed by the program's assistant coordinator, Barbara Loste. "I think that Columbus is a mysterious figure because we've managed to mystify the whole period. Columbus was created increasingly as an icon because we sought such a symbol."

This icon is what makes the man so appealing to the nations that have claimed him as their hero, including Spain, Italy and the United States, among others. "This tug of war over who he 'belongs to,'" as Dr. Hébert put it, accounts for many of the myths about Columbus.

Until Columbus set sail in August 1492 on the first of four journeys to the New World, he was an unknown in history. But even then, after his 1492 landfall, there are few materials that document his life. Said Ms. Loste: "There are a handful of letters he wrote or received that are extant; others about him exist. But few provide adequate



Columbus's coat of arms, from *Christopher Columbus, His Own Book of Privileges*, London, 1893 facsimile of 1502 original copy; "Mexica warriors confront Cortés's soldiers," from Fray Diego Durán in *Historia Antiqua de la Nueva España*, 19th century manuscript facsimile of 16th century document

information about his life before 1492."

Even the document that is most crucial regarding the voyage of 1492—Columbus's log—survives today as a second-generation abstract. "His log was copied in the early 16th century by Father Bartolomé de Las Casas—who added his own commentary, thus leaving open questions about Columbus's original notes and Las Casas's additions," she added.

For Columbus, the experienced sailor, the Holy Grail was to find a westward route to Asia. He first moved to Portugal to enlist royal support for his venture, but his efforts were in vain. He then moved to Spain, where through good luck and persuasiveness, he gained the support of Queen Isabel and King Fernando in 1492 after repeated petitions.

Columbus's voyage made him famous throughout Europe, and he was granted by the Catholic monarchs the title of Admiral of the Ocean Sea. Unlike some other later explorers and conquerors, such as Cortés, who decided to live in the Americas, Columbus always returned to Europe. "He never became an 'American,' " said John Hébert. "Columbus," he added, "was very anxious to become part of the upper echelon of Spanish society. He did not identify with the people he encountered in America. He saw his achievements as a stepping-stone to historical eminence. Ironically, the impact on history of the linking of the Western and Eastern hemispheres, as a process initiated by Columbus's voyages, was not appreciated by him or his peers. It is only in hindsight that we attempt to understand the full significance of the event of 500 years ago.

After 1492 Columbus led three more expeditions to the Caribbean region, believing till his death that he had found a new route to Asia. The lands he explored were not named after him but after another Italian explorer, Amerigo Vespucci. "In a sense, the naming of America in 1507 was part of the process of inventing America," said Dr. Hébert.

"People in Europe had a preestablished idea of what they would see in the Americas, or rather in the part of the world which was later named America," he continued. "Long before 1492, writings in Europe described mythical or imagined parts of the world, such as a fountain of youth in Asia or cannibalism in Japan. Filled with the knowledge of these images of a world that did not include America, post-1492 explorers and conquerors of America conjured these images as reality. Marco Polo and Jean de Mandeville had written about a fountain of youth and cannibalism in their pre-1492 travel books. Ponce de León is said to have searched for a fountain of youth in Florida. And from Columbus's logbook forward, Europeans looked for cannibals and Amazon women and cyclopses in the Americas. Names and activities bandied in Europe for decades before 1492 to describe areas in the 'Far East' were now used after 1492 to describe peoples and places. Misunderstandings about where they were and whom they met deeply affected the interpretation of the information

"African slaves in a sugar mill (in the Caribbean)," from Theodor de Bry in *Grands Voyages*, 1595

gathered by Europeans on the Americas."

Many of the notions about America were based on Europe's belief that the New World must be younger and thus inferior to Europe. "If it contained civilizations more advanced, it would shake the Europeans' self-image," said Ms. Loste.

"America, the hemisphere," she added, "is seven times the size of Europe. It was unfathomable for Europeans at the time. America in imagery has been depicted as a passive, inviting woman welcoming Europe to her shores. That image fit into Europeans' notions of the New World."

Some Europeans refused to believe that a new continental landmass had been uncovered. "Many people thought that everything that existed had been revealed in the Bible, and, of course, America was not mentioned. So to get past this, for a very long time America was assumed to be an extension of Asia, and later that its inhabitants had come from Asia," said Dr. Hébert. "Highlight items" featured in the third section of the exhibit in "The Atlantic Joined" section relate to this notion:

☐ World map by Johann Ruysch, in Ptolemy's *Geographia, 1507*. North America is shown as an extension of Asia in this map, with South America as a distinct landmass. Ruysch based his engraving on the latest Portuguese and Spanish explorations and the voyages and reports of Amerigo Vespucci. According to Ms. Loste, the map was widely circulated and very influential in Europe.

A scroll at the left side of the map symbolizes the Western boundary, with the announcement that "this map is left incomplete for the present, since we do not know in which direction it trends."

☐ "It was particularly fortunate that the age of European discovery coincided with the emergence of printing in Europe, which not only made maps cheaper and available to a wider audience, but made them more likely to survive," said John Hébert.

Like Columbus, Vespucci was an Italian working for Spain.

On a page of his *Cosmographiae introductio* (1507), Martin Waldseemüller wrote that Vespucci had discovered a fourth continent. "I see no reason why anyone would object to calling that part . . . America . . . after its discoverer." There was no one around to raise an objection: Columbus had died the year before.

☐ Map of America by Diego Gutiérrez. This 1562 map, the largest map of America printed at that time, shows Charles V, King of Spain, Holy Roman Emperor and grandson of Fernando and Isabel, as a new Caesar in a chariot crossing the Atlantic to lay claim to a new world and a new empire.

Gutiérrez, a Spanish chart and instrument maker as well as a pilot, worked in the Casa de Contratación in Seville (the central authority for Spanish travel to America and custodian of sailing charts and directions) from 1534 until he died in 1554. All pilots who accompanied Spanish expeditions were required to turn over their charts to this central authority.

"Atlantic World," from Battista Agnese, [World Atlas], Venice, 1544 manuscript on vellum.

'Explore New Worlds' Of Science Fiction

A 20-by-24-inch poster with a science fiction emphasis has been produced using the Library's "Explore New Worlds–READ!" theme by Cartoonists Across America and Bridge Publications Inc.

The featured character, who is surrounded by books, is the alien Hippocrates from the book *Ole Doc Methuselah* by L. Ron Hubbard. Baker & Taylor is distributing the poster to 16,000 public and school libraries, and Bridge Publications will send it to 11,000 bookstores. Individuals who would like a copy should write or call Bridge Publications, 4751 Fountain Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90029. The telephone number is (213) 664-6007.

The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress was established in 1977 to stimulate public interest in books, reading, and libraries. "Explore New Worlds–READ!" is the center's national reading promotion theme for 1992; Cartoonists Across America is one of the 101 national oganizational partners participating in the campaign. All of the projects of the Center for the Book and its 26 state centers are supported by private contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations. For further information, write the Center for the Book, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540.

Columbus Exhibit *(Cont. from p. 209)*

When this map was drawn in the early 1550s, it contained the most up-to-date information available on America. It correctly showed the existence of the Amazon River system, other South American rivers, Lake Titicaca, the location of the great silver mines at Potosí and coastal features of South, Central, North and Caribbean America.

Though much of what Gutiérrez depicted was accurate, he was also given to flights of fancy. Most of the interior of the Americas was still unknown, and he filled in this part of his map with images of parrots, monkeys, mermaids, giant sea creatures, cannibals and giants.

The map, engraved by Hieronymus Cock, was about a decade out of date when it was published in 1562. The Library's copy is one of only two known to be in existence.

☐ "Columbus, a foreigner at the Spanish court, constantly feared for the security of his position," said Barbara Loste. "His insecurity was not unfounded. His disgrace in later years was brought about by the intrigues of others as well as by his own administrative bungling in the Indies."

The Library's vellum copy of his "Book of Privileges" is one of four that Columbus commissioned to record his agreements with Fernando and Isabel. It awarded Columbus 10 percent of any wealth gained from mines and commerce and made him viceroy of any new lands he might discover on his way to Asia.

Columbus had the document notarized by two local judges and three notaries at his house in Seville on Jan. 5, 1502. The Library's vellum copy is unique in preserving an unofficial transcription on paper of the Papal Bull (decree) *Dudum siquidem* of Sept. 26, 1493, in which Pope Alexander VI extended Spain's rights to the New World.

☐ "Much concerned with social status and convinced of the epochal significance of his service to the Spanish crown, Columbus was eager to be granted a heraldic coat of arms," said Dr. Hébert. "There is an illuminating gap between the heraldic devices that were authorized and those that Columbus simply appropriated. He was authorized to include in its first two quarters the castle and the lion, royal emblems of Castile and León.

In the other two quarters are a map of the newly discovered islands, to which Columbus ordered that a continent be added, and five ship's anchors, borrowed from the Admiral of Castile. Since he was not of noble origin, he added an unidentified blazon in the point for his family arms.

–Guy Lamolinara

Next: "Europe Claims America."

The Passing '92s:
Some Sources for Celebration

by John J. Wayne

The year 1492 is so indelible as a turning point in the world's destiny that its significance tends to overshadow other anniversary events.

Perhaps in 1992, a sampling of a few of the significant people and events of some of the " '92s" during the 500 years since Columbus might be reason for reflection.

France in 1792, following the Revolution three years earlier, marked both its first public execution by guillotine, touted as a 'more humane' form of execution, and the composition, by Roget de Lisle, of its new national anthem, "La Marseillaise." The end of the French monarchy, and of the monarchs themselves, followed soon after.

In Russia in 1892, Tchaikovsky completed composition of *The Nutcracker*, with its debut ballet performance in St. Petersburg that same year. Nov. 1 at St. Petersburg's Maryinsky Theatre also marked the first performances of Rimsky-Korsakov's spectacular new folk opera, *Mlada*. In Italy, 1892, Ruggiero Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci* saw first publication in printed form.

In the United States and abroad, music classics still familiar today were introduced in 1892. Edwin H. Lemare's *Andantino in D Flat* is an example of a melody that gained worldwide appreciation in 1925 with the addition of lyrics, when it emerged as "Moonlight and Roses." The "Daisy Bell" of 1892 is more familiar as the "Bicycle Built for Two."

Charles K. Harris's "After the Ball," practically a signature for the 1890s, is still enjoyed a hundred years later. John Philip Sousa, the drum-major of march composers, favored 1892 with his "Lion Tamer March."

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892–1950). *Photo by Arnold Genthe, from Arnold Genthe Collection, Prints and Photographs Division*

In London and New York, Macmillan in 1892 published Rudyard Kipling's "Ballads and Barrack-Room Ballads," perhaps a direct result of the 1891 U.S. legislation for the first time allowing for "international copyright" relations between England and the United States. Similarly, Longmans, Green in New York was first to publish the book version of *Nada the Lily*, the new African adventure by Kipling's friend and colleague Henry Rider Haggard. The first of Oscar Wilde's four comedies, "Lady Windermere's Fan," made its debut on the stage of London's St. James's Theatre on Feb. 20, 1892.

Patents granted in 1892 included one to William Burroughs for "the first recording adding machine," and another to Thomas A. Edison for a "speaking telegraph." A new class of advertising materials was extended copyright privileges that year. These were dubbed "prints" and "labels" (presumably to distinguish between them, although these distinctions were later blurred as the art of advertising developed, and the confusion between "advertising prints" and "art prints" became similarly hazy). The other distinction at the time was that, although this art was now subject to copyright protection, its copyright registration formalities were

administered by the United States Patent Office, owing to its "commercial" or "trade" aspects.

The 1892 registration No. 1 for an advertising print, under this new aspect of the copyright law, related to a two-sided rendering of the Heinz pickle.

Walt Whitman (1819–1892). "I see ranks, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, I go among them, I mix indiscriminately / And I salute all the inhabitants of the earth." (From "Salut au Monde!" in the 1881 edition of *Leaves of Grass.)*

The death of Walt Whitman in

Janet Flanner (1892–1978) in masquerade, Paris 1925. *From Prints and Photographs Division*

Camden, N.J., on March 26, 1892, saw an end to this American poet's impassioned lifelong quest for human freedom, free-thinking and individual expression. Beginning as a rural teacher, writing also for magazines and newspapers, Whitman served successively as editor of *The Brooklyn Eagle* and *The Brooklyn Times,* beginning his monumental and ever-growing *Leaves of Grass,* a celebration of humanity, individuality and the joys of nature. Serving as a volunteer nurse in Washington during the Civil War, Whitman completed a volume of war poetry chronicling his experiences, *Drum Taps,* which was later incorporated into *Leaves of Grass.*

Whitman's liberal convictions had already cost him his editorial positions in Brooklyn. In Washington, his postwar clerkship at the Indian Department ceased when Secretary of the Interior James Harlan declared *Leaves of Grass* "indecent," a barometer for the prevailing ethic of the day. Because of intervention by his many friends, Whitman was restored to a clerkship at the office of the Attorney General. An attack of paralysis forced his final move to Camden in 1873, where he earned his living by lecturing and from book royalties and the assistance of friends.

The centennial of Whitman's death is being observed as a part of the exhibition "Turbulences & Metamorphose" at the Maison de la Poesie in Paris, with a number of items reproduced from Library of Congress Manuscript Division collections. There are also the "Walt Whitman Centennial Conference" at the University of Iowa, the "Democracy's Poet" lectures and exhibits in and around Manhattan and recent recordings by composers Ned Rorem and John Adams.

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892–1950). "Safe upon the solid rock the ugly houses stand: / Come and see my shining palace built upon the sand." (From *A Few Figs from Thistles: Second Fig,* 1920.)

Following her death on Oct. 19, 1950, the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay was praised for the freshness, passion and independence of her early work. The youthful red-haired Millay embodied the free-thinking, rebellious, bohemian spirit that animated so many of the arts in the early years of the 20th century. She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1923, only six years out of Vassar College. Her poetry was deceptively simple: "Spring rides no horses down the hill / But comes on foot, a goose-girl still / And all the loveliest things there be / Come simply, so it seems to me."

"Edna St. Vincent Millay was The Village and The Village was Edna St. Vincent Millay," remarked poet John Ciardi in 1950. A foreign correspondent for *Vanity Fair* in the early '20s, Millay was also a member of the early Provincetown Players. She published three verse plays and later wrote the libretto for Deems Taylor's grand opera *The King's Henchman.*

In 1923 Millay settled with her husband, Eugen Jan Boissevan, on a farm in the Berkshires in upper New York state. Her writing after this was criticized for its lack of power. "Having outgrown her youth, Edna Millay had outgrown the one subject she could make exciting," Ciardi wrote. Now even her early work seemed outmoded and mannered, as the voices and styles of other poets increased. Thus, it would seem that this might have sprung from Millay's later indifference to living. Her work will probably undergo a reassessment as a result of a recent centennial celebration during the conference held at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, N.Y., last Feb. 21–23.

Janet Flanner (1892–1978). "After looking at the 3,000-odd canvases, you go out with a feeling that one of your eyes may be orange and the other pink and that one of your shoulders is certainly six inches higher than the other." (Janet Flanner (Genet), writing in *The New Yorker,* "Letter from Paris," Oct. 24, 1925, on the Salon d'Automne art exhibition.)

In September 1925, Flanner relates, on beginning her "Letter from

Paris" column for Harold Ross, that *The New Yorker* editor told her only that he "wanted to know what the French thought was going on, and not what I thought was going on." Assuming the *nom de plume* Genet, chosen by Ross as a play on her first name, Flanner managed all that—and a bit more.

Born in Indianapolis on March 13, 1892, Janet Flanner's talent as reporter/chameleon developed with her first assignment for *The Indianapolis Star:* reviewing the vaudeville and burlesque shows. But she managed to enlarge upon her assignment to include all the arts. Previously, she had attended, and withdrawn from, the University of Chicago, returned to Indianapolis, and found employment for nine months at a girls' reformatory. In 1918 she married one of her former Chicago classmates, Lane Rehm, and the couple relocated to New York, where she became very much a part of the artistic avant-garde. In 1922 Flanner and writer Solita Solano settled in Paris, after an extensive tour of Europe and Turkey begun the year before.

Among the 1920s' "Lost Generation" in Paris, Flanner found the atmosphere most congenial. Her artistic contacts increased to include almost any figure of importance on the scene.

She was *The New Yorker's* familiar, formidable Genet. Her dispatches from Paris, interrupted only by World War II, form a wry testament to goings-on in the City of Light, mock-conservative but definitely *au courant*. From her original and reprinted *Letters*, any gaps in knowledge and understanding of the personalities, events and sentiments of the day can be filled in.

Janet Flanner died in New York in November 1978, after a life of great distinction. Composer Ned Rorem's *Letters from Paris: From Janet Flanner's Paris Journal (1966)*, a choral setting of Genet's own text, is probably the most apt monument to Flanner's particular style and wit.

James M. Cain (1892–1977). "It was nothing but a roadside sandwich joint, like a million others in California. There was a lunchroom part, and over that the house part where they lived, and off to one side a filling station, and out back a half dozen shacks that they called an auto court. I blew in there in a hurry and began looking down the road." (From *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, 1934.)

James Mallahan Cain, newspaperman and novelist (he preferred "playwright" or "spinner of yarns," as he termed his authorship of his "hard-boiled" crime fiction), was born in Annapolis, Md., on July 1, 1892, the son of a St. John's College professor of math and English literature who had married a woman with operatic aspirations. A precocious student, Cain was a graduate of Washington College in Chestertown, Md., by 1910—just a month short of his 18th birthday. After a period of odd jobs in the southern Maryland-Washington, D.C., area, Cain returned to Washington College in 1914, but this time as an instructor.

He enlisted in the Army in 1918. Following his training, he was shipped to France as a member of the 79th Infantry Division, served in action near the Western Front, and in early 1919 (following the armistice the previous November), Pvt. Caine, with Pvt. Gilbert Malcolm, founded and coedited the weekly *Lorraine Cross*—noted for its timeliness and popularity with the troops, through May of that year.

His newspaper apprenticeship had begun in Baltimore, with the *American* in 1917 and the *Sun* in 1918. It included a stint of investigative reporting of a Maryland murder that eventually led to a suspect. He was also a contributor to *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Nation* and *The American Mercury*. Later he wrote controversial editorials and reviews at the *New York World*, and was a writer for *The New Yorker* under Harold Ross.

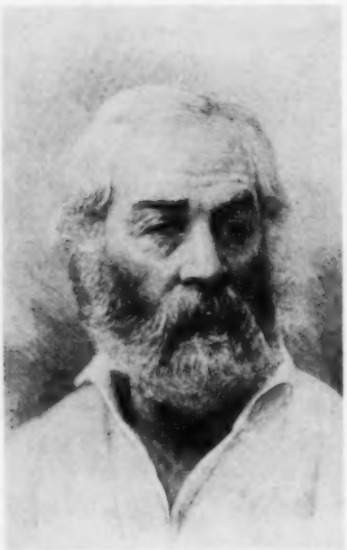
Cain's friends and mentors included the worldly Baltimoreans H.L. Mencken and W.C. Fields, along with Gotham's already- or about-to-be famous. His experiences—as writer, editor, reporter, even subject of controversy—would stand him in good stead for the next phases of his career: as novelist and Hollywood screenwriter, beginning in 1931.

Cain's greatest successes began as novels and short stories: *Double Indemnity*, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Mildred Pierce*, which became immensely successful films of the *noir* genre. His specialty, first-person narrative in the vernacular of the character, was fresh, innovative and popular, but Cain termed it almost a personal drawback, that he, at his best, would always write as someone else, someone with concerns other than his own.

Pearl S. Buck (1892–1973) in 1965. *From Prints and Photographs Division*

Another key device in his terse style was the omission, in dialogue, of identifying the speakers at each line: "Why all this saysing?" But his personal hero, he claimed, was "Ring Lardner, not Hemingway."

In 1948 Cain and his fourth wife, opera soprano Florence Macbeth, moved to Hyattsville, Md., as Cain began research for a Civil War novel at the Library of Congress. This work was unsuccessful despite years of research and rewriting, and Cain also unhappily discovered that the Hollywood of his novelistic triumphs no longer existed, due to the inroads of television. He continued writing to the end of his life, however, and saw new success with the republication of his classics and occasional pieces in *The Washington Post*. He was also the subject of two biographies and numerous profiles. He died at 85, on Oct. 27, 1977.



Walt Whitman (1819–1892) in 1863. *Engraving by T. Johnson, from Prints and Photographs Division*

Pearl S. Buck (1892–1973). "Somehow I have always been an object, rather than a person. As a child, I was white with yellow hair and blue eyes in a country where everyone knew the proper color of hair and eyes was black, and skin was brown. I can remember my Chinese friends bringing their friends to look at me because I was different. By the time I came to this country I was different again. I was already what people call famous. People came to see me as they would an object, not a person." (From *My Several Worlds*, 1954.)

Pearl Comfort Sydenstricker was born in Hillsboro, W.Va., on June 26, 1892, the child of Presbyterian missionaries who had already served 12 years in China. Her parents, who had lost three of the four children born to them, dutifully returned to China with their newborn daughter only three months later. So childhood began in Chenchiang, 200 miles west of the mouth of the Yangtze River, where Pearl spoke Chinese before she spoke English, her hair in a Chinese queue styled like her father's—for he believed that foreigners should live like the locals, not in isolated compounds. At boarding school in Shanghai, at 15, she said that "[I] ceased to think of myself as different, if indeed I ever thought so, from the Chinese." Her writings attest to this, and throughout her life she worked to further understanding between Asia and the West.

When she was 8, Pearl, her sister Caroline and their parents were forced to flee to Shanghai during the Boxer Rebellion, when the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi decreed death for any white man, woman or child in China. The next year, after the rebellion had been put down by European, U.S. and Japanese forces, the family returned to Chen-chiang.

Pearl Sydenstricker was president of her 1914 graduating class from Randolph Macon Women's College in Lynchburg, Va., where she also had earned a Phi Beta Kappa key and two literary prizes. She returned to China, where she taught school for two years before marrying John Lossing Buck, a missionary and agricultural specialist, in 1917.

The couple lived in north China for five years, where Pearl Buck taught English literature before moving to Nanking. She returned to the United States in 1924 with her husband and daughter to earn a master's degree in English at Cornell University in 1925. Her thesis was on history, however, and this was later published as *China and the West*.

Her role as author emerged when she and her family returned to Nanking, teaching English literature at the university there and at Southeastern and Chung Yang universities. During a troop rebellion and the looting in 1927, she was forced to take refuge for a year in Japan and she lost the original manuscript of her novel-in-progress.

The first Buck novel, *East Wind: West Wind*, in her very readable style, appeared in 1929. In 1931 came her famous *The Good Earth*, while the first novel was already in its third printing. Based in China, both novels stressed Buck's "universal human themes," earning instant fame for her, as well as the Pulitzer Prize in 1932. Translated into more than 30 languages, *The Good Earth* won the Howell's medal in November 1935 as "the most distinguished work of American fiction in the past five years." In 1938 she was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature for the "entire body of her work."

By 1933 she had left the Chinese mainland forever, "knowing that communism would win because of its growing appeal to the peasantry" and because she had renounced her connection with the church and its foreign missions. Her articles in *Harper's* and *Cosmopolitan* had brought her under fire as a heretic, her opinions inconsistent with Presbyterian doctrine.

Returning to America in 1935, Pearl Buck divorced her first hus-

band and married Richard A. Walsh, president of the John Day Co., her publisher. She had adopted a second daughter—and adopted eight more children, many of mixed blood, during her lifetime—even though she had learned some years before that her own eldest daughter was severely retarded. The success of her novels, and their dramatizations for Broadway and Hollywood, assured the Walshes of support for the children, a home in New York and an estate in Bucks County, Pa.

Her literary output was prodigious, running to some 85 novels and short stories by 1972, with some 25 awaiting publication. Among her works were biographies of her father and mother, and of Carol, her retarded daughter. Also included were five novels she had written under the pseudonym John Sedges. "I was very pleased," she remarked, "because the reviewer in *The Kansas City Star*, not knowing the book was actually written by a woman who had spent most of her life in China, said it could only have been written by someone who had spent a lifetime in Kansas."

Before World War II, Pearl Buck had founded the East and West Association to further relations with Asia. When this failed, she began Welcome House, an adoption agency for Amerasian children, who were often fathered by American troops. For this she opened the two houses on her 400-acre Bucks County estate to children awaiting placement.

But her critical remarks had severed her connection with China itself. "Even old tigers like Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Kai-shek cannot live forever," she hopefully predicted. As a result, she was later denied admission to China, because her writings had "taken an attitude of distortions, smear and vilification toward the people of China and their leaders." As a result, her work was unknown, since it officially did not exist, to the new generations of Chinese. But now her work is being favorably rediscovered and reassessed in China.

Following her death at Danbury, Vt., on March 6, 1973, after bouts with pleurisy and gallbladder surgery, President Nixon described Pearl Buck as "a human bridge between the civilizations of the East and the West. . . . She lived a long life as artist, wife, mother and philanthropist." She was survived by her 10 children and 12 grandchildren.

Already, in 1967, she had given her estate, her homes, her film and television royalties and most of her earnings to the Pearl S. Buck Foundation to aid Amerasian children in seven Asian countries and to operate Welcome House.

Archibald MacLeish (1892–1982). "But I didn't know how to proceed, so we went down a little bit before the first of October, got a house, moved in, and then on the first of October, I got into my car, found my way to the Library of Congress (fairly difficult because I didn't know the road), and to the parking lot, which was back of the main building. There were two white lines for the Librarian, so I drove in between the two white lines, whereupon one of the members of the custodial staff, wearing a sort of policeman's uniform, came out of the door and said, 'Hey, you can't drive in there. Can't you see? It's reserved for the Librarian.' I nodded my head, and he (responded with a shocked impiety). That was my greeting!" (From MacLeish's reminiscences on becoming Librarian of Congress in 1939, in *Reflections*, 1986; reprinted by permission.)

Archibald MacLeish, American poet and the ninth Librarian of Congress, was born May 7, 1892, the son of a Chicago merchant father and a former Vassar professor mother; MacLeish termed himself a 'Yankee Scot.' He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Yale University in 1915 and entered Harvard Law School, marrying Ada Hitchcock the following year. World War I interrupted his course of studies, as MacLeish entered the Army for service first in the ambulance corps and later in the field artillery in France. At war's end, MacLeish was a captain with a French Legion of Honor. The three years of law practice that followed persuaded the MacLeishes to attempt a rash move—to pursue the poet's profession—to Paris. "Four can live as cheaply as one," they had decided. (By this time, they also had two children.)

The MacLeishes—he as poet, she as aspiring singer—and their offspring, joined the ranks of the legendary American and European writers, painters and entertainers who lived in Paris during the 1920s and formed the essence of Janet Flanner's dispatches. For five years, from 1923 to 1928, the MacLeish family fared very well in this artis-

James M. Cain (1892–1977), from a 1930 book jacket

tic enclave, gaining their footing with newfound friends and influences, convincing themselves of the virtues of similar bold ventures in the future.

On his return to America, the family settled in Conway, Mass. MacLeish was inspired to journey to Mexico to pursue the route of Cortés on foot and muleback for a retelling of Bernal Diaz del Castillo's memoirs. Titled *Conquistador*, MacLeish's poetic version, nearly 400 years after Castillo, earned him his first Pulitzer Prize in 1932. One of MacLeish's 1933 articles for *Fortune* magazine, on Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, earned him the president's attention, and an invitation to a White House luncheon in 1938, presumably to discuss a proposed Roosevelt library. The president had other, less obvious, agenda: in 1939 he named Archibald MacLeish as Librarian of Congress.

The MacLeish era at the Library, 1939–44, was marked by much-needed reorganization of the institution and its collections. He did some fine-tuning to adapt the Library's services to American wartime needs and made fervent efforts to take the Library—and Washington itself—to higher cultural standards.

MacLeish established, for instance, the first Chair of Poetry for a poet-consultant, named refugee intellectuals such as author Thomas Mann and Alexis St. Leger (the poet "St. John Perse") to consultancies in German and French literature, and established poetry readings and musical concerts for the Coolidge Auditorium, as well as *Library Quarterly*, a forum for Library specialists in all disciplines.

PRESERVES
CELERY SAUCE
KETCHUP
THE ORIGINAL
HEINZ Condiments
introduced in 1869 have won over 30 FIRST MEDALS & AWARDS
BEWARE OF COUNTERFEITS!!
The Genuine always bear This KEYSTONE TRADE-MARK
HEINZ'S SWEET PICKLES, CHILI SAUCE, CELERY SAUCE,

Heinz Pickle, registration No. 1 of a new class of 1892 copyrights—administered by the Patent Office. *From Copyright Office Collections*

Wartime information needs mandated the first issues of the staff *Information Bulletin*, as well as the establishment of the Roosevelt-sponsored Office of Facts and Figures, which MacLeish also headed in 1941–42. This later became the Office of War Information, which MacLeish assisted in directing during 1942 and 1943. Each directorship was a full-time job in itself.

Only MacLeish's poetic output suffered in this exchange, and his wish to resign in favor of his muse was countermanded by Roosevelt, who named him assistant secretary of state for public and cultural affairs. Here, MacLeish assisted in the drafting of the United Nations charter before resigning his government post in 1945. He participated as chairman of a delegation that established UNESCO, and headed the American delegation to its first Paris conference in 1946.

In 1949 MacLeish returned to a professorship of rhetoric and poetry at Harvard, and a concurrent lectureship at Amherst College. His *Collected Poems 1917–52* earned him a second Pulitzer Prize in 1953, and *J.B.*, a verse-play on the Book of Job, another Pulitzer—and the Antoinette Perry "Tony" Award—in 1959.

The Eleanor Roosevelt Story (1965), a documentary film based on MacLeish's book, won an Academy Award in 1966. His poetry and dramas for theater and radio were highly regarded and earned many honors and awards, among them the Bollingen Prize and the National Book Award for poetry (both in 1953), the Presidential Medal of Freedom (1977), the National Medal for Literature (1978) and the American Academy of Arts and Letters gold medal (1979).

Nor did his association with the Library of Congress cease. He recorded for the Library archive and appeared at the Coolidge Auditorium in 1956 and during the 1976 bicentennial. At age 89, Archibald MacLeish died in Boston, on April 20, 1982, during an eight-month period that also marked the deaths of two of his successors as Librarian of Congress, Luther Evans and L. Quincy Mumford. Biographer Scott Donaldson's *Archibald MacLeish: An American Life*, published by Houghton-Mifflin/Davison and excerpted in this issue beginning on page 218, was published May 7, the centennial anniversary of the birth of this poet and renaissance man.

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Compiled by Marguerite Bloxom, Bibliographic Specialist, with assistance from David Kresh, Reference Specialist. Humanities and Social Sciences Division.

Mr. M Goes to Washington:
A Call from On High

The following is reprinted from the book Archibald Macleish: An American Life *by Scott Donaldson, A Peter Davison Book, published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. Copyright 1992 by Scott Donaldson. Reprinted by permission.*

The LC Information Bulletin *in this and subsequent issues will be reprinting excerpts from Mr. Donaldson's biography relating to MacLeish's tenure at the Library from 1939 to 1944.*

Archibald MacLeish's . . . deepening friendship with Felix Frankfurter led to six years of service in Washington under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. . . . Frankfurter was blessed with a natural warmth and a genius for friendship. He was also eager to advance the careers of his friends and protégés whenever the opportunity presented itself.

That opportunity arose in the spring of 1939, when Frankfurter, a newly appointed associate justice of the Supreme Court, received a memorandum from President Roosevelt. For months FDR had been stewing over the problem of finding a replacement for 78-year-old Herbert Putnam as Librarian of Congress. What did Felix think of Archie MacLeish for the post? "He is not a professional Librarian nor is he a special student of incunabula or ancient manuscripts," the president acknowledged. "Nevertheless, he has lots of qualifications that said specialists have not."

Frankfurter heartily endorsed the idea, and in a long reply made a series of points in support of his former student. The most eminent librarians of the past 50 years, he pointed out, had not been technically trained for the work. Subordinates could keep the day-to-day operations going easily enough. But

Archibald MacLeish on the balcony outside the Poetry Office in the Jefferson Building. *Photo from LC Archives*

the director of a great library should have imaginative energy and vision. "He should be a man who knows books, loves books and makes books." MacLeish was manifestly such a person; but more than that, he was also acquainted through his work with the developing media of radio and motion pictures. Then in an irresistible brief, Frankfurter summarized MacLeish's wide range of accomplishments and capabilities:

"It must be remembered that Archie was one of the leaders of his class at the Law School, proved his metal as a very able lawyer, was invited to join the Harvard Law School Faculty, then pursued his poetic career, was the most effective editor of *Fortune,* and this year showed astonishing personal and organizing faculties in connection with the Nieman Fellowships at Harvard. He unites in himself qualities seldom found in combination—those of the hardheaded lawyer with the sympathetic imagination of the poet, the independent thinker and the charming 'mixer.' He would bring to the Librarianship intellectual distinction, cultural recognition the world over, a persuasive personality and a delicacy of touch in dealing with others, and creative energy in making the Library of Congress the great center of the cultural resources of the Nation in the technological setting of our time."

Frankfurter sent a copy of his May 11 recommendation to Archie, and the following day MacLeish was called to New York for a talk with Congressman Kent Keller, chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on the Library of Congress. By Monday May 15, Archie had made up his mind—or thought he had—to turn down the position if it was offered. In a letter to Felix, he admitted that he was capable of doing well a number of things that didn't usually go together. In his versatility, he knew, he was not at all "the kind of person with whom the word artist is commonly associated." Yet an artist he was determined to be, and so could not sensibly accept even the place of great honor and distinction for which Frankfurter was advancing him. In the course of saying no, Archie's letter sounded more like maybe. It was possible, he wrote, that he had reached the place in his life where he must turn from poetry to public service, but if so, he probably wouldn't be "of much use . . . because the one thing I have ever wanted to do with all my heart was to write poetry." Then he added a

postscript. He'd just had a phone call from the White House inviting him to lunch with the president on Tuesday May 23. He was loath to waste FDR's valuable time, but had already wired the White House that he would come. What did Felix think he should do?

Frankfurter urged him to come to Washington, and arranged a breakfast for MacLeish with himself and Roosevelt brain truster Tommy Corcoran. What they talked about, in Felix's house overlooking the Potomac, "was the Republic and the obligation to serve it," a message that appealed powerfully to the canons of service Archie had inherited from his mother and maternal grandfather. "You and you alone," he wrote Frankfurter when leaving Washington, "have dared to believe that men do enter Government ... because they believe in the Republic and wish to serve it." Fresh from that meeting, he went on to the White House to confront Roosevelt's charismatic blend of personal charm and public authority. Afterwards he took the train back to Farmington tortured by doubts.

Almost all the indicators pointed toward a negative decision. He knew he was being asked to make a long-term commitment—Putnam had been librarian of Congress for 40 years!—and that the work would require so much of his energy as to make the writing of poetry virtually impossible. "It's a job from which no traveler returns," as Gerald Murphy put it. Seeking advice, he consulted Harvard librarian Keyes Metcalf. Metcalf told him that being Librarian of Congress was primarily an administrative position, that a good deal of reorganization would probably be necessary, and that an important part of the job would involve seeking funds from congressional committees. "That's not what I want to do with my life," MacLeish responded, and that, Metcalf thought, was the end of the matter. Archie's friend Kenneth Murdock, of the Harvard English department, exhorted him to decline. Nothing could be worse for him as a poet than to become Librarian of Congress, Murdock told him. He needed the time to write. As for Ada, she understood that sooner or later Archie would have to earn some money, since poetry paid no bills, and their dividends were not sufficient to see the children through college. Still, she could not be enthusiastic about the move to Washington.

On Sunday May 28, Archie wrote the president that he must reject his offer. The difficulty was one of time, he explained. He could not believe that the job of Librarian of Congress would leave him time to practice his art. "Either the art or the library would suffer, and either result would be disastrous to the man." He hated to say no: he had been "going round and round the apple tree for four days but I end up every day at the same place." Then he added in conclusion: "I should be proud indeed to be useful to you in any capacity which did not deprive me of the trade I follow." Roosevelt was not accustomed to being turned down, and so Tommy Corcoran called and informed Archie that he was lunching with the president yet again, and this time Archie capitulated. FDR made him feel that Librarian of Congress was the most important job in the world. He painted visions of the library as a great educational institution for the country at large, with fleets of bookmobiles roaming the illiterate South. He praised the essential democracy of the national library, a place where any citizen—old or young, rich or poor, black or white, scholar or schoolboy, executive or laborer—could go to read a book without so much as asking leave. Archie left fired with enthusiasm, the captive of the president forever.

"Mr. Roosevelt," MacLeish was wont to say in later years, "decided that I wanted to be Librarian of Congress." But there was more to it than the persuasive powers of the president. Archie did after all need a salary, and he was reluctant to go back to Harry Luce, hat in hand.

Besides, it was his pattern when presented with a difficult challenge to face it down. In this case he said: "I just stopped thinking about it. I decided to take it on and do what I could do as well as I could do it." There were those on the sidelines who deplored MacLeish's choice, who saw it as the act of an overambitious and overbearing man. So Dwight Macdonald, his former *Fortune* colleague, characterized Archie as, basically, "a power guy." It was true that his six years in Washington would draw him close to the very center of power—closer than any other American man of letters. Yet perhaps the strongest factor in changing Archie's mind was his lifelong determination to be of use. If there was one thing he had learned from his mother, it was that his life should make a difference. He had tried through poetry and drama to make good things happen; now he would try through the more conventional channel of public service. In retrospect, he looked back on his "improbable and impossible" tour of duty as Librarian of Congress as "about the best thing that ever happened" to him, for it gave him a chance to experience the life of public responsibility, at least for a while. Archie took the job President Roosevelt offered him, then, because he could not do otherwise. He was, in the words of his fellow poet Richard Wilbur, "a naturally high-minded man," one of the "passionate serving kind."

Roosevelt made MacLeish's decision easier by assuring him that he would be able to find time for his writing. According to legend, FDR told him that he could polish off his duties as Librarian of Congress before breakfast. In his June 1 letter of acceptance, Archie specifically mentioned this assurance as his final

precondition. To underline the point, he asked for the summer off before assuming his post. He was hard at work on a long poem—*America Was Promises* – and could not take up his duties until October 1. In a wonderful reply, President Roosevelt granted the three-month leave and made gentle fun of his appointee's devotion to his art.

"Dear Archie MacLeish:—

"It is one of those curious facts that when I got your first letter I took to my bed with a severe attack of indigestion—and that when your second letter came I found myself able to rise and resume my normal life.

"You make me very happy and the nomination will go to the Senate in a few days. I will take care of the matter of approval by the Senators from your State.

"It is perfectly all right about your taking office after the Summer is over—say the end of September or the first of October. And I am also very clear that you will be able to take "time off" for writing, especially if you like travel to distant parts where you could also improve your knowledge of ancient literature. For example, as Librarian of Congress, you should become thoroughly familiar with the inscriptions on the stone monuments of Easter Island—especially in their relationship to similar sign writing alleged to exist on ancient sheepskins in some of the remoter lamaseries of Tibet. If you go on such a trip I would like to go along as cabin boy and will guarantee that I will not interrupt the Muse when she is flirting with you!

"As ever yours,

"Franklin D. Roosevelt"

The Opposition. Given his political sensitivity, President Roosevelt may have anticipated the storm of protest his nomination of Archibald MacLeish would generate. MacLeish, however, certainly did not. The president made his announcement on June 6, and within minutes a staffer on the *Washington Evening Star* relayed the word to David C. Mearns at the Library of Congress. Pausing only to check the name in *Who's Who*, Mearns rushed to the office of Martin Roberts, who was acting librarian in the summerlong absence of Herbert Putnam in Maine. Roberts at once called Putnam with the unlikely news about MacLeish. "Mr. Mearns said he's a P-P-POET!" Roberts stammered into the phone.

The reaction of Roberts and, one assumes, of Putnam was as nothing compared to the consternation among the officers of the American Library Association, who had for months unsuccessfully sought an appointment with Roosevelt to advance the candidacy of one of their own, ALA executive secretary Carl H. Milam. As the librarians began to muster their forces for an onslaught against the nomination on professional grounds, the first volley of political opposition came from J. Parnell Thomas, Republican congressman from New Jersey and a member of the House's Special Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities, also known as the Dies Committee. On June 7, from the floor of the House of Representatives, Thomas coined a new phrase to condemn by association those who, like MacLeish, had once shared some of the views of the Communist party. This nomination and others, Thomas insisted, indicated that Communist influences were at work in the White House. He did not accuse MacLeish of actually belonging to the party. He was instead, according to Thomas, one of its leading "fellow travelers."

Pressed by administration supporter Sam Rayburn, Democrat from Texas, to define his term, Congressman Thomas said a fellow traveler was one "who is absolutely sympathetic with the Communist cause, but for various reasons does not care to be a party member." Was he calling MacLeish a communist? Rayburn demanded. Thomas dodged the question by widening his accusation. Rayburn could hardly deny, could he, that the administration had been appointing either communists or fellow travelers to key positions in the government. "I do deny it!" Rayburn roared. "And I think the gentleman's statement is little short of slander." Having apparently drawn blood, Thomas returned to the attack a week later with more particulars. Specifically he focused on the 1937 League of American Writers meeting in which Archie, as chairman, had introduced Earl Browder, adding the erroneous information that MacLeish had been elected vice president of the league. Thomas was clearly relying on the dubious principle of guilt by association. "To a large extent," he intoned, "we may know a man by the company he keeps."

A fellow New Jerseyite, Dean Christian Gauss at Princeton, wrote Archie his congratulations: The inevitable has happened. You have already been honored by having been officially called a communist. . . . I have heard FDR called so many times. I'd like to be called one too, so can't you get me in on it?" But MacLeish could not take the matter so lightly. Recalling his differences with the party faithful over the years, he declared that "no one would be more shocked to learn I am a Communist than the Communists themselves." Nor did he particularly welcome the support of the League of American Writers, which pointed out in rebuttal to Thomas, first, that it was not a Communist-front organization (a point on which reasonable men might well disagree), and second, MacLeish had never been an officer (the truth, pure and simple).

The second serious challenge to Archie's appointment came from the embattled American Library Association. Milton James Ferguson of the Brooklyn Public Library, the ALA president, expressed his outrage in a flurry of similes. Giving this post

to a nonprofessional librarian, he said, was like "making the skipper of a racing yacht the Chief of Naval Operations." He had the highest respect for MacLeish as a poet, but could "no more think of him as Librarian of Congress than as chief engineer of a new Brooklyn Bridge." It was about the same, he said, "as appointing a man Secretary of Agriculture because he likes cut flowers on his dinner table." The *New York Herald Tribune*, in an editorial written by Geoffrey Parsons and headlined "A Shocking Nomination," agreed without resorting to spurious metaphors that the man in charge of the world's greatest library should be well acquainted with running libraries. As it happened, the ALA was holding its national meeting in San Francisco in mid-June, and there Ferguson and Milam marshaled their forces. They wrote and circulated a petition, signed by 1,400 librarians present. Appointing MacLeish, it maintained, would be a calamity. Librarianship was "not a literary pursuit" and writing was "not of itself a suitable preparation for it." The Library of Congress would almost certainly deteriorate under amateur leadership. The appointment of a nonlibrarian would be a slap in the face of the nation's 30,000 librarians, and would deter talented young people from entering the profession. In addition to launching this petition, the ALA executive council urged its members to bombard the Senate with letters and telegrams expressing their objections, and to contact local newspapers seeking editorial support of their views.

Before beginning this full-scale campaign, the ALA decided to give MacLeish a chance to withdraw from consideration. Keyes Metcalf was chosen to call Archie from San Francisco with this proposal, and did so, though not without some discomfort. MacLeish responded no, vigorously and without hesitation. In the first place, he told Metcalf, he was not going to withdraw under fire, for that would be cowardly. As ever, he would not shrink from the battle. Second, he was not going to renege on his word to President Roosevelt. "Keyes," he said, "have you really thought about what you're asking me to do? The president has . . . sent my name up to the Senate and you're suggesting that I should now undercut his nomination and go back on my commitment." "Well," Metcalf said, "I see your point."

So the issue was joined, and Archie soon found that he had plenty of allies. Several newspapers, including *The New York Times*, *Hartford Courant* and *Boston Herald*, heartily endorsed his nomination. And from the first, there were defections within the ALA. Milton C. Lord of the Boston Public Library wrote MacLeish from San Francisco that what "the library crowd" was saying at that moment was "not to be taken in any sense personally." They had no alternative but to howl, but when the howling was over, Lord and many others would be ready to aid MacLeish in any way they could. More openly, M. Llewellyn Raney of the University of Chicago libraries denounced the ALA campaign as "badly overplayed" and "marked with such persistence and intolerance as to awaken resentment in Washington and revulsion among the soberer, scholarly element at San Francisco." Chicago's Raney enthusiastically backed MacLeish, partly out of admiration for his parents. MacLeish, like Putnam, was a lawyer, he pointed out, and that was entirely appropriate for the director of the library of the nation's lawmakers. He was also equally at home in the arts "as one of the four leading American poets now alive." It was true that he had not attended a professional school of library science, but neither had 34 of the 37 persons presently occupying executive positions at the Library of Congress. As a Scotsman he could be relied on to manage the library's finances with frugality. Finally, Raney struck a counterblow against Ferguson and Milam. "MacLeish did not seek the place," he concluded. "He was besought. Can his two critics say as much?"

Such support was heartening, but MacLeish and his friends looked for still other champions. Charles Curtis approached Harvard president Conant, who decided to remain neutral in the controversy. In a letter to MacLeish, Conant explained his reasons: "I am so regretful at your leaving Harvard and what I assume is a farewell to your career as a poet that the less I say on the subject the better." Metcalf wrote Frankfurter that for his part he could not endorse the nomination, since he could not believe that Archie would "be happy in the work, or willing to stay in it for any length of time" and he feared that the appointment would handicap the movement for professional training of librarians. "I cannot congratulate you," he wrote MacLeish directly, "but I can assure you that if the appointment is confirmed I shall help you in any way that is within my power."

In Washington Dean Acheson used his wide contacts within the Congress to ensure his friend's confirmation. In a letter to Senator George L. Radcliffe of Maryland, a member of the Senate Committee on the Library, Acheson emphasized his long and intimate acquaintance with MacLeish, and in particular praised his capacity for leadership. "At the Law School," Acheson's letter read, "he was a leader both scholastically and in the intellectual life of the School. He had in those days, as he has now, the gift of friendship, and there are few who can spend a half hour with him without catching the fire of his enthusiasm and wanting to go with him on whatever task he has in hand. His courage has been shown on the football field, as an officer in the Field Artillery during the World War, and by his willing-

ness to stand for the right as he has seen it against any opposition."

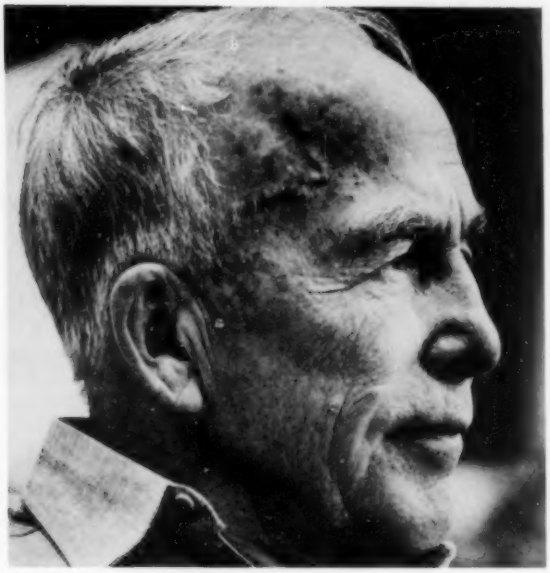
Senator Radcliffe was persuaded, but not everyone Acheson contacted could be brought to vote for MacLeish. In particular, he could not sway Senators Warren Barbour of New Jersey and Warren Austin of Vermont from opposition. The problem was the charge of fellow traveling. As Barbour put it in a letter to Acheson, "If the information I have received about MacLeish and Earl Browder and all the rest of it is really based on fact, I wanted to tell you, old man, that I am afraid it may be impossible, after all, for me to vote for his confirmation." At this stage, Acheson brought the weight of his alma mater to bear. On June 21 Yale University awarded MacLeish an honorary Doctor of Letters degree, the fourth among dozens of such degrees he was eventually to accumulate. The same day, Reeve Schley, a member of the Yale Corporation, wrote J. Parnell Thomas that he could assure him of one thing: that MacLeish was "not only far from being a communist but, on the other hand, [was] thoroughly detested by the communistic party." Acheson sent a copy of Schley's letter to Senator Barbour, who could not be budged because he was under "tremendous" pressure from fellow New Jersey congressman Thomas to do a good deal more than vote against the nomination. Nonetheless, Barbour said he would leave the task of making the case against MacLeish to Senator Austin. Austin himself promised Acheson only that "I shall not make the claim that Mr. MacLeish is a Communist."

Indeed he did not, though he managed to raise the issue. "My contention will not be that this man is a Communist," Austin stated in the course of his opening speech at the confirmation hearing of June 29. (Nor did he contend that MacLeish was a criminal or a wife-beater.) But he did quote from articles and reviews that he felt illustrated the nominee's radicalism and excessive liberalism—qualities to be expected from a fuzzy-minded poet, perhaps, but not to be countenanced in a position of responsibility. In his long statement Senator Austin read into the record the Ferguson-ALA petition against MacLeish, and an autobiographical sketch Archie had written for the 1931 edition of *Living Authors*. The manner of the sketch was ironic and self-deprecatory, but Austin was disposed to take literally such statements as "War: went abroad in a hospital unit so as to do the right thing but not be hurt. In France got shifted to the field artillery out of shame," and "Went to Harvard Law School to avoid going to work. Led my class in last year." It was necessary for Senate Majority Leader Alben Barkley, Democrat of Kentucky, to interrupt with the intelligence that MacLeish was using "a Pickwickian, facetious way of referring to himself, because nobody could lead his class at Harvard without doing a considerable amount of work." Undeterred, Austin went on to cite objections to the appointment from the *New York Sun*, the *Baltimore Sun* and the *New York Herald Tribune*. In conclusion, he asserted that "in this particular case there is no evidence whatever which tends to show that this brilliant litterateur and poet has any qualifications at all for an executive, for an administrator, or for a librarian."

Senator Barkley himself led the defense. He cited encomiums for MacLeish and his appointment from various newspapers. "So warm and generous a spirit, keenly sensitive to the finest cultural traditions, aflame with love of liberty, can hardly be a danger to the Library of Congress," *The New York Times* opined. His appointment, said the *Boston Herald*, was "not only good but brilliant." Barkley produced letters of enthusiastic support from librarians Raney and Alexander Laing of Dartmouth, and from businessman and philanthropist Louis Kirstein. In dealing with what he called "the effort to make light of Mr. MacLeish because he is a poet," Barkley discovered a precedent in the case of James Russell Lowell, both poet and ambassador to the Court of St. James's. Moreover, he insisted, MacLeish was "much more than a poet," no mere moongazer but lawyer, editor, educator. During the committee hearing, he added, the nominee had been so impressive that members unanimously approved sending his name to the Senate floor. As for the outpouring of opposition from the ALA, it was entirely possible he would have received a thousand letters and telegrams against the appointment from librarians without prodding, Barkley admitted, but the fact was that "the secretary of the organization did ask them to write." It was worth noting, too, that not one of those communications attacked "the character, or even the views of Mr. MacLeish on political, social, or economic problems."

When it was time to call the question, Barkley played his last card, in effect reminding those on the fence that any defectors from the president's choice would be duly recorded. He asked for a roll-call vote, and added that he was confident there would be, "if any, not more than a few votes against the confirmation of the nomination." With the full strength of the Democratic Party and FDR behind him, Barkley proved to be absolutely right. The final tally was 63 in favor, eight opposed, and 25 not voting. "Your majority," Corcoran wrote MacLeish, "was disgraceful!"

Now the fence-mending process commenced. Ralph Munn of Pittsburgh's Carnegie Library, the newly elected president of the American Library Association, wrote MacLeish on July 1 conveying the ALA's "sincere good wishes for your complete success." He regretted that the



MacLeish in 1972

organization's "attempt to secure a professionally trained librarian had to take the form of a protest against your confirmation," but assured him that these were the only grounds for opposition. "We all recognize and admire your personal qualities and talents." MacLeish responded that he regarded the protest as "quite natural" and that he bore no lingering resentment, though he did regret "the tactics adopted by certain representatives of the ALA." It was important that they all work together in the future. There the issue rested, for the moment. It remained for Archie to prove to his detractors what an amateur librarian could accomplish.

First, however, he had *America Was Promises* to finish. He spent most of the summer in Conway working on that long poem and trying to put thoughts of what awaited him in Washington out of his mind. On July 10 he stopped by the local post office and got postmaster Charles Dacey to give him the oath of office. "We did it through the wicket," MacLeish said. By that time he had already learned from Tommy Corcoran that he would have opportunities to serve the president in ways that had nothing to do with the Library of Congress. "Don't you think you'd better begin to think about a Rhodes Scholarship scheme for South American students?" Corcoran asked. There was one other thing he wanted, too. Couldn't Archie use his connections to persuade some eminent historian—Sam Morison, perhaps, or Charles Beard—to publish an article "debunking the Third Term myth": the notion that American presidents were somehow prevented by something more than 150 years of custom from serving beyond eight years. The purpose of such a piece was obvious. Roosevelt would be coming up for a third term in the fall of 1940.

To solidify relations with his appointee, FDR invited Archie and Ada to spend the July 21–23 weekend at Hyde Park. The festivities included a clambake at the nearby estate of Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr., and possibly—so Ada anticipated—one of the Roosevelts' famous hot dog picnics. "I hope it won't count against me that I hate hot dogs," she wrote Sara Murphy. Aside from that, her feelings about Archie's post were mixed. She was afraid he wouldn't have any time for his own writing, yet she was glad of anything that would give the family "a home all together."

The highlight of the weekend was provided Sunday morning by fellow house guest Alexander Woollcott, the well-known writer and columnist. Archie and Ada went off for a brisk walk while Eleanor Roosevelt was at church, and returned to spy Woollcott sitting on the porch in a pair of shorts. As they got closer, they could see clearly that one of Alec's testicles was on display, hanging out of his shorts. They were about to say something to him when Mrs. Roosevelt's car drove up and she alighted. She must have seen what they did, the MacLeishes thought, but she said only, "Well, Mr. Woollcott, how lovely to see you on my porch."

In private conference with the president, MacLeish discovered something of his views about the Library of Congress. The pay levels were "too low all along the line," Roosevelt told him. At the same time, he said, "a lot of thoroughly nice people there . . . would simply have to be removed." The library had grown moribund over the last decades of Putnam's tenure, and badly needed modernizing. Archie began to envision his role as that of an unpopular newcomer, disturbing the status quo. A luncheon meeting with Putnam at the Century Club in New York did nothing to alter this view. Putnam fully intended to come into the library regularly as librarian emeritus, he announced. Later, in a conference with Luther Evans, who was then directing the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Historical Records Survey at the Library, Archie said he supposed the staff must be quaking in their boots anticipating his arrival and the changes he would bring. It wasn't that way at all, Evans insisted. He knew nearly every division chief at the Library, and almost all of them were thirsting for real leadership. "Putnam's been in his dotage for several years," Evans said. "You're going to have a warm welcome at the Library of Congress."

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